Synopsis

On

A STUDY OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE LENS OF TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN MANIPUR

By

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INTRODUCTION

Manipur is one of the eight states in the north-eastern region of India, situated in the extreme north-eastern border. Manipur shares her international border with Myanmar, and national state boundaries with the states of Nagaland, Assam, and Mizoram. Manipur lies between 23.50 degree N and 25.41 degree N latitude and between 93.03 degree E and 94.47 degree E longitude(Singh 2005:17). The total geographical land area of the state is 22,327 square kilometres (Singh, Rizvi & Horam 1998: 1).

The capital of Manipur is Imphal situated in the plains, though Manipur is largely hilly. The Hills make for ninety-one percent of the state's area. And it is inhabited by a number of tribes who broadly align themselves with one or other of the three tribal constellations, namely the Naga, the Kuki and the Mizo. They account thirty percent of the state's population. The fertile valley is inhabited by the Meiteis, Loi, Yaithibi, Brahmin, Bishnupriya and Pangal (Manipuri Muslim). The Mieteis account to 65 percent of the State's population (Chatterjee 2010: 755-756). As per Census 2011, the total population of the state is 28.56 lakhs of which male and female are 1,438,586 and 1,417,208 respectively. The decadal population growth in 2011 was 24.50 percent. And the sex ratio of Manipur is 985, which is quite above the national average of 940 as per census 2011. It is interesting to see that even though the populations of both the sexes were almost same, the number of females engaged in Household Industry Manufacturing and Processing were comparatively higher than that of male(Statistical Handbook of Manipur: 2017). This is also reflected in the contribution of women in its socio-economic and cultural life which makes Manipur unique. From the famous *Nupi- Lan* (Women's war) to the active *Meira Paibis*(Torch Bearers) and the *Ima Keithel*(Mother's Market) which is totally govern by the women are few of the examples that show that women organizations have influenced the Manipur society in many ways by giving Manipur its women leaders. The present-day women's organizations have been spawned to a great extent from their tradition and so it upholds the value of the unity and together they are moving forward. This particular study aims to understand the working of these organizations and the nature of change brought in terms the range of activities engaged in by women and to see how leadership is emerging among women. The study further aims to see how these women organizations are affecting the empowerment of women as individuals; and their attitudes towards the girl child.

The researcher wants to blend the concepts and theories in group dynamics (structure and process of the group), leadership and social work methods to understand the multi-dimensions related to organizational culture and women leadership leading to an empowered society as social work plays an important role in directing leadership and capabilities towards long-lasting enhanced social change.

Statement of the problem:

Women have been deprived of an equal share of rights because of the age-old system of gender discrimination, economic oppression, and social stratification. In the time of globalization, the challenges women face for their development is to ensure economic empowerment and self-reliance (Agrawal 2009: 15-16). But Manipuri women are traditionally more engaged with socio-economic and cultural activities than their counterpart. There are a number of organizations governed by only women members. But it is not explored whether these women's groups or organizations are empowered. It is also not known whether their engagements with economic activities are uplifting their position in the family or society at large. A close study of these organizations will give an understanding of whether or not these organizations are playing a role in terms of engendering leadership in particular and realization of their rights in general.

Key terms of the research

Women's organizations in Manipur, Empowerment of Women through membership and their changing social status in family and society, and Engendering leadership and playing leadership roles.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

While reviewing literature in order to frame the research questions and to gain knowledge on the topic the researcher focused on historical accounts of the state and its ethnic composition; historical accounts of women's movements with the focus on critical events; accounts of women's responses in modern Manipur; and stories of individual women perceived as leaders, important change agents and as role models. The researcher also looked into theories related to group dynamics and leadership and aspects of empowerment.

Historical accounts of the state and its ethnic composition

Manipur has a long and glorious cultural and social history from the beginning of Christian era. The political history also dates from 33 AD with the coronation of Nonda Lairen Pakhangba belonging to the Meitei community, after him, a number of Meitei kings ruled over the kingdom of Manipur (Singh 2013: 15; Sanajaoba 2003, 4). The society of Manipur since 33 A.D. had consisted of different groups and classes which were of feudal nature. The kings were at the top of social-political hierarchy followed by the Brahmins who came in the 15th and 16th century and performs the rites and rituals of the Manipuri society and lowest hierarchy were the slaves to the top two (Ray & Chakraborty 2008: 99-107). The independence and sovereignty of Manipur remained uninterrupted until the Burmese invaded and occupied it for approximately seven years in the first quarter of the 19th century (1819-1826) (Chatterjee 2010: 756). Then, Manipur came under British rule on 27th April 1891(Singh 2005: 21). Manipur became independent in 1947 and merged into the Indian Union in 1949 with princely state status. Manipur became full-fledged State on 21 January 1972 with a Legislative Assembly of 60 members (Chatterjee 2010: 757).

There are nine administrative districts in the state; five districts in the hills namely Chandel, Churachandpur, Senapati, Tamenglong, Ukhrul, and four districts situated in the valley that are Bishnupur, Imphal West, Imphal East, and Thoubal. These are further divided into 38 sub-districts, 51 towns and 2,588 villages (census, 2011). The Manipur Legislative Assembly today consists of 60 seats out of which 20 are reserved for scheduled tribes, 1 for schedule caste and 39 for the general. Manipur has two tiers Panchayati Raj system, with Gram Panchayat at village level and Zilla Parishad in district level. There are four Zilla Parishads for each district in the valley and for the hills there are six autonomous district councils in Senapati, Churachandpur, Ukhrul, Tamenglong, Sadar, and Chandel. The state is represented by 2 members in Lok Sabha and one member in Rajya Sabha (Manipuronline.in).

As per Census 2011, the total population of the state is 28.56 lakhs of which male and female are 1,438,586 and 1,417,208 respectively. The decadal population growth in 2011 was 24.50 percent. And the sex ratio of Manipur is 985, which is quite above the national average of 940 as per census 2011(Census 2011).

In Manipur, the Hills make for ninety-one percent of the state's area. And it is inhabited by a number of tribes who broadly align themselves with one or other of the three

tribal constellations, namely the Naga, the Kuki, and the Mizo. They account thirty percent of the state's population. The fertile valley is inhabited by the *Meiteis, Loi, Yaithibi, Brahmin, Bishnupriya* and *Pangal* (Manipuri Muslim). The *Mieteis* account for 65 percent of the State's population (Chatterjee 2010: 755-756).

Literacy rate in Manipur shows an upward trend and is 76.94 percent as per 2011 population census. Of that, male literacy stands at 83.58 percent while female literacy is at 70.26 percent. In actual numbers, total literates in Manipur stands at 1,908,476 of which males were 1,039,858 and females were 868,618 (Census 2011).

Table 1 Distribution of working population in Manipur

Particular	Male	Female
1. Main Worker	615135	359028
(a) Cultivator	281162	185606
(b)Agricultural Labourer	24534	21075
(c) Household Industry Manufacturing and Processing	14009	31915
(d) Other Services	295430	120432

(Statistical Handbook of Manipur 2017, Directorate of Economics & Statistics Government of Manipur Lamphelpat)

Even though the populations of both the sex were almost the same, the number of females engaged in Household Industry Manufacturing and Processing was comparatively higher than that of the male. It might be because women were engaged in traditional practices of weaving, processing through the *Ima* Market which is solely run by women.

Hinduism and Christianity constitute the majority religion in Manipur with 41.39 % and 41.29 % followers and are followed by Islam with 8.40 %. Jainism, Sikhism, and Buddhism have less than 1% followers each. Around 8.19 % is the follower of other religions not listed in the census (Census, 2011). The traditional religion, *Sanamahi* is listed under others among which this is the dominant religion. The Vaishnavism was introduced in 15 A.D. (Das & Basu 2005:29).

Historical accounts of women's movements with the focus on critical events

Nupi-Lan:

The *Nupi-Lan* movement were powerful movements against British imperialists. It is loosely translated as 'Women's War'. The first war was broke out in 1904. The cause of the outbreak of this movement was the introduction of the new colonial administrative system in Manipur after 1891, the 'Lallup System' a kind of feudal service which was abolished(Singh 2005: 73-96). But this system was tried to introduce again by the British who had consigned Manipuri men to forced labour *Lalup* to restore the burnt-down houses of Captain Nattal and Dr. Dunlop at night (Sircar 1984:34-35). Thus, the womenfolk of Manipur rose up in protest against this injustice. The British eventually succeeded in suppressing the uprising but had to rescind the order (Singh 2005: 73-96).

The rooted cause of the second *Nupi-Lan* movement of was directly related to the irregularities and malpractices in the administration of the state. Another factor was the economic exploitation by the authority aided and abetted by the colonial exploiters. In 1939, it occurred against a famine created by an excessive export of rice right in the harvest season. This, too, was eventually suppressed by the British, though it took several months and the emergence of World War II. What was significant about this second movement wasn't the number of women who protested, but rather the reaction of the British. They deployed both military and police forces against unarmed female protesters (Singh 2005: 73-96). The brave women, who fought may have lasted several months but lost many lives in their battle. These movements were launce under a system of collective leadership in the form of mass movement by womenfolk. These women movement in Manipur shows a characteristic of group leadership rather than of individual act (Singh 2005: 73-96).

These two wars have shown that at the time of crises and need the Manipuri women do not seat back, instead they come forward for their family, people, and state. They are brave and committed even though they had to fight against the big empire as British without any arms. And their contribution is still been remembered and admired.

Nisa Bandis:

The *Nisha Bandi* came into force in the 1970s, during that time, Manipur was flooded with drugs, narcotics, alcohol as a result of which young boys and men succumbed to addiction(Mukherji 2010: 1). This gave rise to numerous crimes, public disorder, wife-beating and other forms of gendered violence. Traditionally having a role in controlling the social ills of the society, Meitei women took upon themselves the responsibility to control the rising disorder in the society. Ordinary women started forming groups and doing night vigils/ patrols in their respective *leikai* (locality) to prevent the drunken men from creating menace. If found drunk, the man would be beaten by a mob of women and publicly humiliated. Consequently, these women's groups started seizing locally brewed liquor from the distributors and doing mass scale destruction publicly (Mukherji 2010: 1). They were thus called the "*Nisha Bandis*". The efforts of the *Nisha Bandis* resulted in Manipur being declared a dry State (Mukherji 2010: 1). This *Nisha Bandis*, later on, became the *Meira Paibis* which is discussed below.

***Meira Paibis*:**

In May 1980, two CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force) jawans were killed in their camp on a hillock by the PREPAK (People's Revolutionary Party of Kanleipak, an extremist organization) soldiers in Langjing (a village in Imphal). In retaliation, the CRPF jawans came down to the village and started a combing operation. People were pulled out from their houses and search was conducted to nab down the PREPAK soldiers(Mukherji 2010: 1). Men were made to stand with their hands up for the whole day and in the scuffle, a woman was killed(Mukherji 2010: 1). In order to tackle the situation, Manipur was declared a disturbed area and the Armed Forces [Special Powers] Act (AFSPA) 1958, was imposed in September 1980 which legitimized full-scale military operations, permitting even a non- commissioned officer to kill anyone on mere suspicion with guaranteed immunity (Mukherji 2010: 1). In December 1980 Ibomcha (corrected) from Hairangoithong Maibam Leikai was captured by the Army as a suspected insurgent. The *Nisha Bandis* at night used firewood on bamboo sticks as torches to march to the police station and get Ibomcha released. This march of the *Nisha Bandis* with torches turned them into the Meira Paibis or Women Torch-bearers (Mukherji 2010: 1).

Today, the *Meira Paibis* are much more organized than before (Mukherji 2010: 2). The *Meira Paibis* can be divided into three groups at the State level, district level, and leikai (local) level. Every leikai in Imphal, Thoubal and Bishnupur districts have a women's collective called the Meira Paibis. Communication and mobilization are well developed among the *Meira Paibis*. The structure of the *Meira Paibis* is loose and strong at the same time. They don't have any fixed office in every *leikai* nor do they meet to discuss issues every day. Only when there is a crises situation do these women gather as *Meira Paibis*. The issues are taken up at *leikai* level range from neighborhood fights, theft, the threat from Under Ground for extortion, elopement, extra-marital affair, desertion of women to combing operations done by the Army. The leikai level groups also join the State level groups (whomever they are affiliated to) in order to carry out a protest rally or a *dharna*. Interestingly the *leikai* level organization did not happen on its own but was initiated by the State level *Meira Paibi* organizations. There are many *Meira Paibi* groups which are not registered and function on their own (Mukherji 2010: 2).

Ima Market:

The *Ima* Market's origin is believed to be dated back to the 16th century. This 500-year-old market has been the important meeting ground and trading hub of Manipur. The market has women traders constituting to the number of 5000. Studies suggest that the market of female-only workforce originated as a result of the enforcement of the *Lallup-Kaba*, forced labour system in Manipur that sent men of the *Meitei* community to cultivate faraway lands and fight wars. The women stayed back in the villages, working in their own paddy fields, taking care of their household and selling their farm produce in improvised markets. This led to the creation of markets where women played a central role, the most important and largest one being the *Ima Keithel*. During the *Nupi-Lan*, the women traders of *Ima Keithel* were the key participants. Run entirely by women, *Ima Keithel* represents the life and ethos of Manipur, a state where women have long been at the forefront of commerce and socio-political protests. A unique cultural experience, this vibrant 'Market of Matriarchs' continues to be a beautiful example of economic empowerment and gender equality (Pal 2016: thebetterindia.com).

Accounts of women's responses in modern Manipur

Armed Forces' Special Power Act (AFSPA):

The AFSPA was first applicable to Naga Hills, then part of Assam. Then one by one, it is enforced in the other north-eastern states. At present, it is enforced in Assam, Nagaland, Manipur excluding Imphal Municipal area, and Changland and Tirap districts of Arunachal Pradesh (Chadha 2012: 10-11).

In1970 Manipur was declared a disturbed area and all revolutionary organization were declared unlawful. The Arm Forces Special Power Act 1958 was evoked in the late 1970s. It gives the arbitrary powers to the army personnel when dealing with suspected insurgent with zero accountability for their acts. This results in a number of fake encounters. The State's *Meira Paibis* groups demanded the troops to leave schools and marketplace, and stop detaining young boys and open up the prisons and detention centres to public scrutiny (Chatterjee 2010: 758-759).

In their desperation, Manipuris have risen to extraordinary acts to demand the repeal of the AFSPA and denounce the high-handedness of the armed personnel posted there. The most iconic of these protests is the hunger strike over a decade by Irom Sharmila from 2000 till 2016(added) (Chatterjee 2010: 759). and the 2004 "naked" protest by a group of middle-aged Manipuri women who stood outside the Assam Rifles' headquarters in Imphal with the banner "Indian Army: take our Flesh". The latter were protesting the rape and killing of Thangjam Manorama who was arrested on the charge of abetting terrorism (Chatterjee 2010: 759). In fact, women have been an integral part of the protest against the torture, killings and enforced disappearances that have marked the anti-insurgency operations in the state.

Inner Line Permit:

Manipur demands for the extension of the ILPS as it fears that the state's small indigenous populations would be marginalized in the face of a constant influx of migrants, and in anticipation of a heavier inflow with the imminent opening of the planned Asian Highway and the arrival of a railway line in the near future, as part of the Government of India's Act East Policy. But as we have been witnessing, Manipur's deep ethnic divisions are complicating the issue in a profound way. Explosion of Public Anger This is so particularly in the southern district of Churachandpur, home of the Chin–Kuki tribes, where a sudden

explosion of public anger on the night of 31 August 2015 in the wake of the passing of the contentious three bills, the Protection of Manipur Peoples (PMP) Bill, 2015, the Manipur Land Revenue & Land Reforms (MLR&R) (7th Amendment) Bill 2015 and the Manipur Shops and Establishment (MS&E) (2nd Amendment) Bill 2015—were designed to make the hill tribals in the hill areas ultimately surrender their land to the non-tribal valley. The protestors also fear that the ambiguous definition of "Manipur people" would leave many of the tribal communities dispossessed and disenfranchised. The demand for the ILPS or an equivalent legislation has been strongest in the valley districts and the hills have been either silent, as in the case of most of the Naga districts, or else in vehement opposition, as in the case of Churachandpur district. The hill people fear that the three bills will erode their exclusive right over hill lands accorded to them first by the British's policy of segregation, and then inherited by independent India. Meanwhile, the stand-off between those demanding a law to regulate migrant influx and those opposed to it continues, threatening to take the state to a bloodbath if better sense does not prevail (Phanjoubam 2016: 13-14).

Stories of individual women perceived as leaders, important change agents and as role models.

Rani Gaidinliu:

Rani Gaidinliu is a prominent Naga spiritual leader and a freedom fighter. She became the leader of the "Zeliangrong movement" after the death of the previous leader Haipo Jadonang. The movement was first a revivalist movement of the Zeliangrongs which turned into freedom movement seeking to drive out British from Manipur (Ghosh & Ghosh 1997: 10). This movement has spearheaded the Naga identity in Manipur. The movement took a semi-military, semi-religious and semi-political character (Singh 2005: 58-70). The movement was finally subdued with the capture of Gaidinliu, she was arrested on October 17, 1932, and was sentenced to life imprisonment. Jawaharlal Nehru visited her at Shilling jail in 1937 and promised to pursue her release and gave her the title of "Rani" (Queen), later she came to be known as Rani Gaidinliu (Singh 2005: 58-70). She was released after India's independence in 1947 and she continued to work on the movement in a peaceful way through the institutionalized social and cultural organizations (Singh 2005: 58-70). She was conferred with many awards namely tamrapatra Freedom Fighter Award, Padma Bhushan, Vivekananda Seva Award and The Birsa Munda Award. The Government of India issued a commemorative coin on her birth centenary in 2015. Her life story and achievements if

popularized can be of positive value and inspiration to our new generation of children and youths of our nation.

Irom Sharmila Chanu:

Irom Sharmila Chanu is a civil rights activist, also known as the "Iron Lady". On November 5th, 2000 she began hunger strike against the Arm Forces Special Power Act 1958 (AFSPA), she ended the strike on 9th August 2016. It was in protest against the killing of ten civilians at Malom by the Assam Rifles personnel following a bomb attack by the underground outfits on the armed personnel (Ray & Chakraborty 2008: 111).

Yengkhom Jilangamba stated about Irom Sharmila that the focus throughout these 16 years has been on her iconized personality, rather than on the reason and the demand of her protest. She has still not given up her demand, which is to repeal the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act but is merely changing her strategy (Yengkhom, 2016).

Maharaj Kumari Binodini:

M. K. Binodini is a Manipuri Indian writer of modern fictions, essays, ballets and screenplays for feature films, some of which has been recognized internationally (the times 2011). She belongs to the royal family of Manipur state. Binodini studied art from Visva-Bharati University which provided her a rich addition to her maturing personality, and she quickly became a well-known sculptor and painter. She was an ardent campaigner for the preservation of the Manipur culture, the traditional arts and artists, the *maibis* and *pena* players of Manipur, as well as an enthusiastic supporter of the culture of horsemanship and the polo, and she also played an important role in the development of the Manipur University as a Senate and Syndicate member. An ardent admirer and enthusiast of the cinema in Manipur, she was a key player in the establishment of the Manipur Film Development Council, and later, of the Manipur Film Development Cooperation as a member of the Board of Directors. She supported the *Nupi Keithel* and strongly lent her voice and weight to the market women`s struggle against erosive threats that endangered the very existence of this traditional institutional and economic pillar of Manipur. A woman of letters, she contributed regularly to local dailies such as Poknapham, Naharolgi Thoudang in Manipuri and the Imphal Free Press in English, writing letters to the editor, stories, articles, and commentaries on current social and political issues in Manipur (kanglaonline.com). She became the first female graduate in Manipur. Binodini Devi was influenced by the writings of Bengali

literature of Saratchandra Chatterjee, bankimchandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, and Michael Madhusudan Dutt. She received the Padma Shri in 1976, followed by Sahitya Akademi Award in 1979 for her novel *Boro Saheb Ongbi Sanatombi* (The Princess and the Political Agent). However, she returned the Padma Shri to protest the alleged rape and killing of Thangjam Manorama by 17 Assam Rifles personnel in 2004(indiaonline.in).

Mary Kom:

Mary Kom is an international woman boxer from Manipur who managed to qualify for the 2012 Summer Olympics where she also won a Bronze Medal. She is a five-time world amateur boxing champion. At birth, she was named as Mangte Chungneijang. An autobiography named 'Unbreakable' was released by Harper Collins in 2013 stating all her life's struggles and how she rose above them. A Bollywood movie was made based on her life portrayed by famous Indian actor Priyanka Chopra. Mary Kom has been awarded the Arjun Award, the Padma Shri Award, and the Padma Bhushan. She is a supporter of animal rights and has been associated with the animal rights organization, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India.

With the above discussion, it is sseen that Manipuri women have come up in the arena when felt needed to fight against the social evils and disruptive external forces. The renowned personalities also have inspired and influence people through their philanthropic acts, welfare activities and excellent contributions in their respective fields. But the question here is, the women in the organizations are they well directed towards a good leadership. How to make these potential women leaders lead in a potent way? What would be the area for social work intervention?

Theoretical perspectives of the study

Leadership is a dynamic process. Effective leadership is always based on critical competencies and capabilities; the ability to manage changes, builds relationship, inspires others, maintain agility, and build decisive strategic perspectives. The group's development and the achievement of goal are mostly based on the leaders, the process and the dynamics (Secord & Backman 1964: 254-255). The leader does use a combination of leadership styles based on their need and situational demand.

Democratic leadership style generates more satisfaction among group members and more effective group functioning than autocratic or laissez-faire style (Secord & Backman 1964: 389-399). In a meta-analysis, Eagly and Johnson found that contrary to stereotypic expectations, women were found to lead in more interpersonally oriented and less task-oriented manner than men in organizational studies. The women led in a more democratic, or participative manner. (Eagly & Johnson 1990: 233-256). Another meta-analysis between 1987 and 2000 also found the similar results. (Van Engen, 2001, as cited in Eagly & Carli 2003:807-834)

Transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people (Northhouse 2007: 175). It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals and includes assessing followers' motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings (Northhouse 2007: 175-176). The transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) and contingency reward component of transformational leadership are positively related to the effectiveness of leadership (Eagly, Johannesen, Schmidt, and Van Engen 2003, as cited in Northhouse 2007: 267)

Theories of group formation

Generally, groups are formed on the basis of attraction. These theories are mentioned below:

Complementary needs theory proposed by Winch in 1958 stresses on the differences as the basis of interaction. The person is attracted to persons who differ in need structure because both the party find the interaction mutually rewarding and another reason is their admiration for individuals who possess the once coveted traits (Secord & Backman 1964: 250-253).

Newcomb's theory says that the persons with a similar attitude towards the common objects or goals get attracted to each other. The attraction and attitudes have to balance in this concept because if both are too strong or too vague or mild, the group interrelationships can disappear (Secord & Backman 1964: 253-265).

Exchange theory views attraction as a function of the degree to which persons achieve in their interaction with others a reward- cost outcome in excess of some minimum level (Secord & Backman 1964: 253-265).

From the above-mentioned theories of group formation, it is visible that groups are usually formed by like-minded members who either want to achieve the same kind of goal or would like to share the same benefit. These groups give the members a platform where they can share their problem, stress, and can even seek support from each other in a crisis. Leadership here plays a significant role as leaders can maximize group productivity and can also maximize group satisfaction. Leaders have a pivotal role in influencing individual member's life, to bring about behavioural change and foresee a sustainable way to keep on the group activity. The researcher in this regard would study the targeted groups and their leadership styles and how it is affecting the lives of the members. At the end, researcher would like to find scope for social work intervention through her study.

Objectives of the research:

With a rich history and tradition of women's movements and women's involvement in economic activities as well as from time to time emerging as strong voices within the State against atrocity right from the British time and recently against the measures of the Government of India (especially AFSPA), the researcher's intention is to understand the following objectives:

1. To do a profiling of the operating traditional and contemporary women's organizations in the selected districts of Manipur with a view to understanding the differences and similarities in their mechanisms of empowerment and leadership.
2. To estimate the women's presence in the socio-economic, political and cultural life of Manipur as indicators of empowerment.
3. To identify the leaders of the organizations and to understand the nature of their empowerment in terms of their perception.
4. To inquire into the characteristics, roles, and styles of leadership as perceived and articulated by women leaders and members.
5. To explore Social Work intervention through casework, group work and advocacy which can be designed to sustain the cultural legacy of women's participation in the public sphere in more contributory and enhanced ways especially in engendering leadership for collective goals.

Research Questions:

1. What is the extent of the role of traditional and contemporary women's organizations in shaping women's lives?
2. What is the extent of Manipuri women's presence in various public sectors-political, cultural, social etc?
3. What are the dimensions indicating empowerment which are felt and articulated by the members of women's organizations?
4. What are the status of the members within organizations and their families viz a viz interaction pattern, sharing responsibility, decision making, and power dynamics?
5. Will a comparison of similarities and differences between traditional and contemporary women's organizations contribute to furthering Social Work interventions in empowerment and engendering leadership among women?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

Exploratory qualitative research design based on casework, group work and advocacy will be applied as the main methods of research.

An exploratory research is done when there are few or no earlier studies to refer for the research problem. The focus is on gaining insights and familiarity for later investigation or undertaken when problems are in a preliminary stage of an investigation.

Pilot study: A pilot study will be conducted first to get an estimation of the feasibly of the study.

Brief profile of the respondents:

Primary Target Group: The primary focus of the work will be the women of traditional and contemporary women's organizations: their members, their leaders and the family members of such women. Children of the age group from 12-16 of these women will also be included. Children in the early adolescent stage are included as they are included as they would be mature to understand their mother's qualities of leadership, organizational capabilities and

what all these mean for them in their growing up years. Their aspirations to follow the examples of their mothers will be a valuable insight.

Secondary Target Group: To enhance the findings of the research, the researcher has taken into consideration the family members, whose responses will provide a stronghold on the outcome. As the study intends to find the empowerment status and change in family roles in regards to leadership and empowerment.

Methods, Tools, and Techniques for Data Collection:

Focus Group Discussion: A focus group can be recognized as a group of individuals who have some common background and experience bought together by the facilitator to be involved in an interaction with each other with the aim of expressing their opinion about a specific subject matter. In this research study focus group, discussions will be carried out with the members of women's organizations and the family members of their leaders. A series of FGDs will be carried out on 7-10 participants. FGDs will be carried out per organization and family members of that organization's leader. It will look for their views, behaviour, and practice among them. A guideline for discussions will be predetermined.

Semi-structured Interview: In this study, semi-structured interviews will be carried out with the leaders of the organizations. The interview will also be carried out with the members of these organizations in the two districts. The interviewer will have a predetermined framework or themes to be explored but the researcher will be open enough to allow new ideas which will be bought up during the interview.

Case Study: A case study is detailed information about a person, group or situation. Case studies allow a researcher to investigate a topic in far more detail than might be possible. If the researcher comes across some unique incidents or instances which have affected the behaviour of the organizations, then the situation will be explored in detail in the form of case studies. These case studies may be of individuals, groups or the organization following unique practice. In this study tentatively 20 case studies will be formulated to intensify the research findings.

Observation: Observation is a complex research method. It entails a systematic noting and recording of events and behaviour of the informants as they occur in a specific situation. Observation usually helps the researcher to study nonverbal expressions of feeling, behaviour attitude etc. The researcher will observe the behaviour, attitude, and body language during

focus group discussion to unearth several untold and unexpressed information. The researcher will use this tool during the whole process of data collection, which will strengthen the data and will help in scooping out the unrevealed details.

Document Review: the researcher will use the previously existing and reliable documents and other sources of secondary information. This will help the study in getting a glimpse of the subject under study and provide perspectives and viewpoints comparison and contrast to be made. Newspaper and magazine stories of women's success; women's enterprise etc., radio and television programmes will be collected between April 2018 and March 2019. Women in public spaces like politics, medicine, law, teaching, administration, cultural activities including films will also form part of the information for this research.

Sampling:

Universe: The total number of registered traditional and contemporary women's organizations in Imphal East and Imphal West districts.

As for the traditional women's market which is popularly known as "Ima market", has three market-sheds namely Ima Market, Laxmi bazar and Linthoinganbi Bazar which are situated in Khwairamband of Imphal West district. All these sheds are totally run by women and they are linked under a union. Along with it, each *leikai* (locality) has its own *leikai keithel* (Local Market) which is also run by the women of that locality.

The well known *Meira Paibis* (the torch bearer) can be divided into three groups at the State level, district level, and *leikai* level. Every *leikai* in Imphal, Thoubal and Bishnupur districts has a women's collective called the *Meira Paibis*. Currently, there are four State level *Meira Paibi* organizations. The "All Manipur Women's Reformation and Development Samaj" (also known as Nupi Samaj), the "Poirei Leimarol *Meira Paibi* Apunba Manipur" (also known as Poirei Leimaro), and the recently emerged the "Kanglamei" and the "Meekhol".

And as for other women run bodies or institutions are concerned, the exact number can't be traced, but according to (www.indianngos.org) there are about 40 organizations and associations which are governed solely by women.

***Sample Size*:** The sample size will be decided after the pilot study.

***Sampling Technique*:** Purposive Sampling will be used.

The process of data collection:

The researcher will contact the organizations first and build up a rapport and then data will be collected. The data will be collected from the members, leaders and the family members of leaders. The researcher will collect the information from one organization and then move to another.

Data analysis:

The data collected will be clustered and categorized into concepts and themes, and it will be interpreted along with defining the relationship between the concepts. The data will be reported in a narrative form.

Ethical Concern

The researcher is a social work professional will abide all the inherent rules pertaining to the profession: informed consent, confidentiality, no fraud and scientific misconduct, transparency and non-judgmental.

Time Line of the Study:

Sl No.	**Activities**	**Time required**
1	Field Work including Pilot Study	18 Months(April 2018-September 2019)
2	Review of literature	6 Months (October 2019-March 2020)
3	Analysis of data and arrangement of the same	6Months(April 2020-September 2020)
4	Writing the thesis	6 Month(October 2020-March 2021)
5	Revision and proofreading of the thesis and doing the required modification	1month (April 2021)

Chapter Plan

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Chapter 4: Profile of selected districts and women's organizations

Chapter 5: Interpretation of data

Chapter 6: Summary and Suggestions

Reference

Annexure

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